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IN THE CLAIMS

1. (canceled)

2. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 31 wherein the particular number x has a binary exponent e in addition to the binary mantissa m;

and further wherein computing a value of $\log(x)$ for the binary floating point representation of the particular number x comprises the steps of:

partitioning a mantissa m of a binary representation of x in a memory, the representation of x including a binary exponent e and the binary mantissa m, wherein a first, most significant part of the partition corresponds to a region i and a second, less significant part of the partition corresponds to a region Δx, where Δx is a distance from mantissa m to reference point $a_i = 1 + \frac{i + 0.5}{N}$; and

computing an approximation to $\log(x)$, using a polynomial of first degree in m and a precomputed value of $\log(a_i)$.

3. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 2 wherein computing the approximation to $\log(x)$ comprises the step of computing an approximation written as:

$$\log(m) \approx \log(a_i) + \frac{(m - a_i)}{a_i};$$

where a_i is a closest reference point to the binary mantissa m of the number x; and

$1 \le a_i < 2$.

4. (canceled)

5. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 32 further comprising the steps of precomputing a value for log(2), and, for each i, precomputing each value of b_i and c_i.

6. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 5 further comprising the step of storing the precomputed values of b_i and c_i in a look-up table.

7. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 2 wherein the number x is represented by a 32-bit representation having a sign bit, an 8-bit exponent, and a 23-bit binary mantissa m having bits b_{22} to b_0 in order of significance with b_{22} being a bit of greatest significance; and the step of partitioning the mantissa m comprises the step of selecting a first group of bits b_{22} through b_{16} as index i and bits b_{15} through b_0 as Δx.

8. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 31 utilized in a computed tomography (CT) scanner for generating an image of an object from acquired projection data of the object.

9. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 8 wherein said natural logarithm is used in an image reconstructor to generate the image of the object.

10. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 8 wherein the particular number x has a binary exponent e in addition to the binary mantissa m;

and further wherein computing a value of log(x) for the binary floating point representation of the particular number x comprises the steps of:

partitioning a mantissa m of a binary representation of x in a memory, the representation of x including a binary exponent e and the binary mantissa m, wherein a first, most significant

part of the partition corresponds to a region i and a second, less significant part of the partition corresponds to a region Δx, where Δx is a distance from mantissa m to reference point $a_i = 1 + \frac{i+0.5}{N}$; and

computing an approximation to $\log(x)$, using a polynomial of first degree in m and a precomputed value of $\log(a_i)$.

11. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 10 wherein computing the approximation to $\log(x)$ comprises the step of computing an approximation written as:

$$\log(m) \approx \log(a_i) + \frac{(m - a_i)}{a_i};$$

where a_i is a closest reference point to the mantissa m; and

$1 \le a_i < 2$.

12. (canceled)

13. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 33 further comprising the steps of precomputing a value for $\log(2)$, and, for each i, precomputing each value of b_i and c_i.

14. (original) A method in accordance with Claim 13 further comprising the step of storing the precomputed values of b_i and c_i in a look-up table.

15. (currently amended) A computing device comprising a memory in which binary floating point representations of particular numbers are stored, said device being configured to:

partition a mantissa region between 1 and 2 into N equally spaced sub-regions;

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precompute centerpoints a_i of each of the N equally spaced sub-regions, where $i=0,...,N-1$, wherein N is sufficiently large so that, within each sub-region, a first degree polynomial in m computes log(m) to within a preselected degree of accuracy for any m within the sub-region, where m is a mantissa of a binary floating point representation of a number; ~~and~~

compute a value of log(x) for a binary floating point representation of a particular number x stored in said memory utilizing the first degree polynomial in m, wherein log(x) is a function of a distance between a_i and the mantissa; and

generate an image by using the computed value of log(x).

16. (original) A computing device in accordance with Claim 15 wherein the particular number x has a binary exponent e in addition to the binary mantissa m;

and wherein said device being configured to compute a value of log(x) for the binary floating point representation of the particular number x comprises said device being configured to:

partition a mantissa m of a binary representation of x in a memory of said device, the representation of x including a binary exponent e and the binary mantissa m, wherein a first, most significant part of the partition corresponds to a region i and a second, less significant part of the partition corresponds to a region Δx, where Δx is a distance from mantissa m to reference point $a_i = 1 + \frac{i+0.5}{N}$; and

compute an approximation to log(x), using a polynomial of first degree in m and a precomputed value of log(a_i).

17. (original) A computing device in accordance with Claim 16 wherein said device being configured to compute the approximation to $\log(x)$ comprises said device being configured to compute an approximation written as:

$$\log(m) \approx \log(a_i) + \frac{(m - a_i)}{a_i};$$

where a_i is a closest reference point to the binary mantissa m of the number x; and

$1 \le a_i < 2$.

18. (canceled)

19. (previously presented) A computing device in accordance with Claim 33 further configured to precompute a value for log(2), and, for each i, to precompute each value of b_i and c_i.

20. (original) A computing device in accordance with Claim 19 further configured to store the precomputed values of b_i and c_i in a look-up table.

21. (original) A computing device in accordance with Claim 16 wherein the number x is represented by a 32-bit representation having a sign bit, an 8-bit exponent, and a 23-bit binary mantissa m having bits b_{22} to b_0 in order of significance with b_{22} being a bit of greatest significance; and wherein said device being configured to partition the mantissa m comprises said device being configured to select a first group of bits b_{22} through b_{16} as index i and bits b_{15} through b_0 as Δx.

22. (original) A computing device in accordance with Claim 15 in a computed tomography (CT) scanner and utilized by said CT scanner for calculating logarithms when said CT scanner generates an image of an object from acquired projection data of the object.

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23. (original) A computing device in accordance with Claim 22 wherein said CT scanner utilizes said computing device to calculate natural logarithm in an image reconstructor to generate the image of the object.

24. (original) A computing device in accordance with Claim 22 wherein the particular number x is stored with a binary exponent e in addition to the binary mantissa m;

and further wherein said device being configured to compute a value of $\log(x)$ for the binary floating point representation of the particular number x comprises said device being configured to:

partition a mantissa m of a binary representation of x in a memory, the representation of x including a binary exponent e and the binary mantissa m, wherein a first, most significant part of the partition corresponds to a region i and a second, less significant part of the partition corresponds to a region Δx, where Δx is a distance from mantissa m to reference point $a_i = 1 + \frac{i + 0.5}{N}$; and

compute an approximation to $\log(x)$, using a polynomial of first degree in m and a precomputed value of $\log(a_i)$.

25. (original) A computing device in accordance with Claim 24 wherein said device being configured to compute the approximation to $\log(x)$ comprises said device being configured to compute an approximation written as:

$$\log(m) \approx \log(a_i) + \frac{(m - a_i)}{a_i};$$

where a_i is a closest reference point to the mantissa m; and

$1 \leq a_i < 2$.

26. (canceled)

27. (previously presented) A computing device in accordance with Claim 34 further configured to precompute a value for log(2), and, for each i, to precompute each value of b_i and c_i.

28. (original) A computing device in accordance with Claim 27 further configured to store the precomputed values of b_i and c_i in a look-up table.

29. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 31 further comprising using the approximation to process at least one image of an object of interest.

30. (previously presented) A computing device in accordance with Claim 15, said computing device further configured to use the value of $\log(x)$ to process at least one image of an object of interest.

31. (currently amended) A method for computing an approximation of a natural logarithm function comprising the steps of:

partitioning a mantissa region between 1 and 2 into N equally spaced sub-regions;

precomputing centerpoints a_i of each of the N equally spaced sub-regions, where $i = 0, \ldots, N-1$;

selecting N sufficiently large so that, for each sub-region, a first degree polynomial in m computes $\log(m)$ to within a preselected degree of accuracy for any m within the sub-region, where m is a binary mantissa of a binary floating point representation of a number; ~~and~~

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computing a value of $\log(x)$ for a binary floating point representation of a particular number x stored in a memory of a computing device utilizing the first degree polynomial in m, wherein log(x) is a function of a distance between a_i and the mantissa; and

generating an image by using the computed value of log(x).

32. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 2 wherein computing an approximation to log(x) comprises the step of computing an approximation written as:

$$y = -\log(x) \approx b_i + c_i \Delta x + e \times \log(2)$$

for $i = 0, \ldots, N-1$

where:

$$b_i = -\log(a_i) + \left(\frac{1}{4a_i N}\right)^2 - \left(1 + \frac{1}{2N}\right)\frac{1}{a_i}; \text{and}$$

$$c_i = -1/a_i.$$

33. (previously presented) A method in accordance with Claim 10 wherein computing an approximation to log(x) comprises the step of computing an approximation written as:

$$y = -\log(x) \approx b_i + c_i \Delta x + e \times \log(2)$$

for $i = 0, \ldots, N-1$

where:

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$$b_i = -\log(a_i) + \left(\frac{1}{4a_iN}\right)^2 - \left(1 + \frac{1}{2N}\right)\frac{1}{a_i}; \text{and}$$
$$c_i = -1/a_i.$$

34. (previously presented) A computing device in accordance with Claim 16 wherein said device being configured to compute an approximation to $\log(x)$ comprises said device being configured to compute an approximation written as:

$$y = -\log(x) \approx b_i + c_i\Delta x + e \times \log(2)$$

for $i = 0,\ldots,N-1$

where:

$$b_i = -\log(a_i) + \left(\frac{1}{4a_iN}\right)^2 - \left(1 + \frac{1}{2N}\right)\frac{1}{a_i}; \text{and}$$
$$c_i = -1/a_i.$$

35. (previously presented) A computing device in accordance with Claim 24 wherein said device being configured to compute an approximation to $\log(x)$ comprises said device being configured to compute an approximation written as:

$$y = -\log(x) \approx b_i + c_i\Delta x + e \times \log(2)$$

for $i = 0,\ldots,N-1$

where:

$$b_i = -\log(a_i) + \left(\frac{1}{4a_i N}\right)^2 - \left(1 + \frac{1}{2N}\right)\frac{1}{a_i}; \text{and}$$

$$c_i = -1 / a_i .$$